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ABSTRACT

Certain definitions and theoretical structures, accompanied by Venn diagrams, are used to distinguish several dimensions of international and interracial communication. International communication occurs on a political level between representatives of nations. Intercultural communication is communication between individuals of different cultures with no previous colonial relationship. Contracultural communication occurs between individuals of different cultures where one culture has superimposed its values upon the other and created a dominant/submissive relationship. Interracial communication (for example, between whites and non-whites in the United States) has non-whites occupying a marginal position in the society and thereby introducing resentment and strain into the interaction. Interethnic communication occurs between members of various non-white groups who have shared the experience of being a racial minority in a white-dominated structure. Other dimensions considered in the model include economic class stratification and the multi-ethnic composition of the white power structure, both of which complicate the possibilities for interracial communication. The purpose of the model is to describe communication as it exists which may allow a diagnosis of the causes of communication breakdown among groups.
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A MODEL OF INTERCULTURAL AND INTERRACIAL COMMUNICATION

by

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In our internationally troubled world and racially tense society, the study of intercultural and interracial communication has become critically important to researchers concerned with the processes and effects of human interaction. This paper is designed to provide a hitherto absent structure within which concepts and hypotheses concerning cross cultural and cross racial communication can be tested and analyzed.

THEORETICAL MODELS: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

According to Barnlund, "A theory or a model is an attempt to represent in symbolic form the underlying relations alleged to exist among the objects or forces that make up a particular event or system." ¹ Such a model aids in structuring events and in clarifying the existing structure of those events. Effective models should aid in developing new ways of approaching the phenomenon they represent and identify variables for further

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study.

While models aid us in structuring our thoughts regarding certain phenomena under question, they may also be misleading in that they tend to either oversimplify a complex phenomenon, or overelaborate simple events. In either case, destructive distortion may result. The most important pitfall to avoid when offering a model is to regard the model as an end in itself. Its primary function is to aid the researcher in translating its component parts into explicit testable hypotheses.³

It is within this spirit of structuring testable hypotheses that we offer our model of intercultural and interracial communication. It should also be stated, at this point, that our model is not designed to offer an utopian notion of how good interracial communication ought to proceed, but rather to provide a structure within which we may describe intercultural and interracial communication as it exists at the present time.

COMMUNICATION DEFINED

It is not the function of this paper to engage in a detailed review of all the available approaches to a definition of communication. Barnlund well delineates the complexity of such a definitional problem:

Communication has been conceived structurally (sender-message-receiver), functionally (encoding-decoding), and in terms of intent (expressive-instrumental). It has been defined with reference to source (production of messages), channel (signal

transmission), receiver (attribution of meaning), code (symbolizing), effect (evoking of response), and in ways that combine several of these criteria. To some, communication is "the process of transmitting stimuli" (Schramm), "the establishment of a commanage" (Morris), "conveying meaning" (Newcomb), or "all the procedures by which one mind affects another." (Weaver). To others, it is "interaction by means of signs and symbols," (Lundberg), "the sharing of activity, excitement, information" (Hefferline), or "the signals that individuals make to each other or which they detect in each other and which may be conscious or unconscious" (Cameron). Nearly every communicative element, function, or effect has been made the focus of some definition at some time.

For the purposes of our theoretical model of intercultural and interracial communication, we shall view communication as a process whereby a source elicits a response in a receiver through the transmission of a message, be it sign or symbol, verbal or nonverbal. We find it necessary to our purposes to include nonverbal and sign behavior in our definition of communication, since intercultural communication frequently occurs without the benefit of a symbolic system which is shared by the communicators.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

As K. S. Sitaram suggests, "international communication" is communication between political structures, rather than between cultures or individuals.⁵ It is communication conducted between nations, frequently carried on by representatives of those nations. The communicators are either national leaders or envoys of those leaders. In the latter case, the government representative seldom has the power to allow himself to be

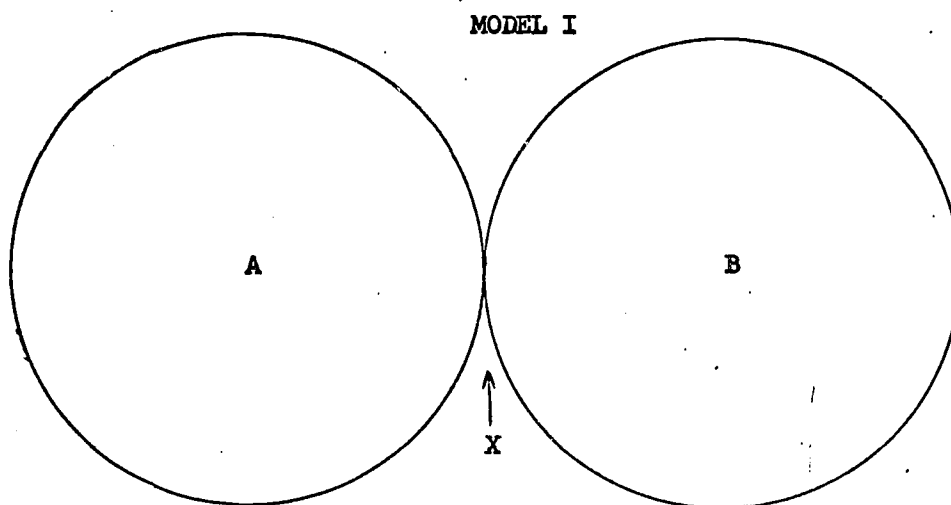
persuaded to any view other than that which represents his government's policy. This, in effect, explains much of the communication failure in the United Nations. Here speakers address more than just the immediate audience of international representatives. They use the speaking platform to project national images and propaganda to the world. Members of the immediate audience are not at liberty to be persuaded for they too must hold the diplomatic line of their respective countries.

The language of diplomacy falls within the domain of international communication. Here, ambiguity rather than specificity is valued in order to more easily allow nations to rationalize their deeds in accordance with stated government policy. Euphemisms such as "premature anti-fascist" (communist) and "preventative reaction strike" (offensive attack) sprinkle the lexicon of international communication.

International communication such as that observed in the Paris Peace Talks, Radio Free Europe, and the United Nations debates is far removed from our concept of individual human interaction. We define it here merely to distinguish it from the primary concern of our paper, which is the development of a structure describing intercultural and interracial communication.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

"Culture is the sum total of the learned behaviors of a group of people which are generally considered to be the tradition of that people and are transmitted from generation to generation." ⁶ By "inter-cultural communication" we mean communication between PEOPLES of different cultures. The important distinction here between intercultural communication and international communication is that individuals, not representatives of nations, are communicating. The following represents a graphic presentation of our concept of intercultural communication.



A and B represent the two communicating cultures. (A_1 and B_1 would represent the individuals within those cultures who are actually interacting.) The important assumption here is that these cultures do not and have not historically existed in a colonial relationship where one of the cultures has taken over or dominated the other for any long period of time. (Hence, the

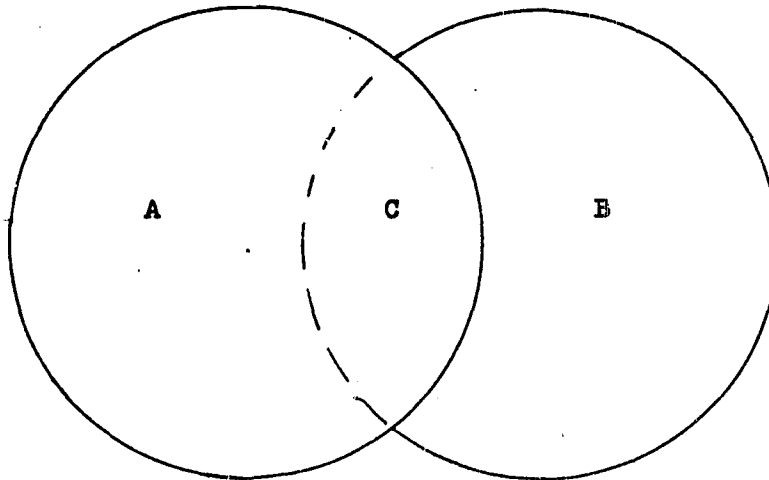
circles do not overlap). This communication occurs between peoples, perhaps, though not necessarily, within a diadic structure.

The communicators may or may not share a symbolic system. In the case of an American speaking with an Australian, intercultural communication is occurring within relatively the same symbolic framework. In this case, the X of our model would refer to that shared system (the English language). In the case of a Frenchman attempting to communicate with a German, a common symbolic system may not be shared; thus the communicators will invent an on-the-spot system, or resort to representational structures such as the drawing of pictures, primitive sign language, or any type of improvised nonverbal communication. When communication is conducted between people of different cultures who do not share a symbolic system, the X portion of the intercultural model represents whatever improvised system they invent to make contact.

As we shall see in our sections on contracultural and interracial communication, the important distinction between intercultural communication, contracultural communication, and interracial communication is the relationship of those individuals communicating. In intercultural communication situations, individuals are strange to each other; they have had a relatively separate historical development. As such, they tend to communicate more or less as equals.

INTERRACIAL COMMUNICATION

MODEL II



This model applies to interracial communication and to what we term "contracultural" communication. We shall first apply it to the interracial communication situations found now in the United States. Circle A represents the dominate power structure. In the case of the United States at the present time, "A" would refer to white America. "A" includes the physical, social, and psychological space occupied by white America. The individuals who occupy that space we shall refer to as A_1 .

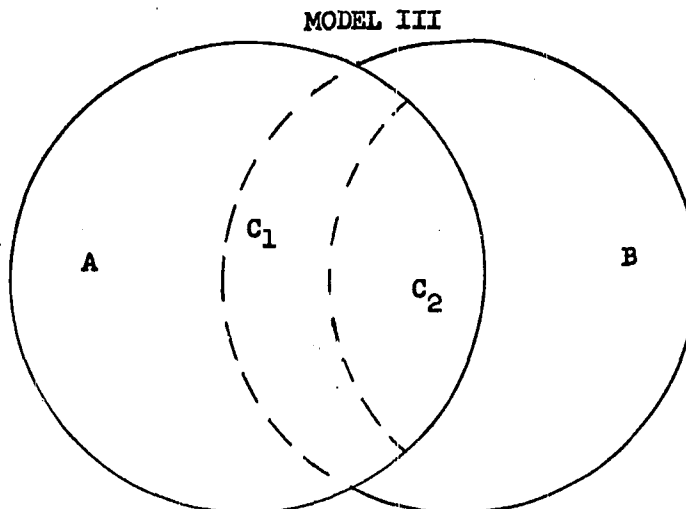
Circle B represents the non-white racial group as it exists in its purest form, uninfluenced by the structure of white America. For example, B_1 (the individual who occupies the physical, social, and psychological space of "B"), could be the immigrant Japanese before he reaches the shores of America, or the Mexican "abuela" (grandmother) who was brought to the United States by her family to dwell in the ethnic shelter of an East Los Angeles barrio. She speaks no English and may have created her

own pure and unaffected racial sub-culture. There is some doubt, however, as to whether one may dwell in the United States and still be unaffected by the white structure. It is possible that "B" may exist only on its native soil or as an idealized concept in the mind of C_1 , (to be defined shortly).

Circle C represents the experience of being a racial minority in a white dominated structure. It is the geographical, social, and psychological space allotted to the non-white American. C_1 (and C_2 , C_3 , etc.) are the individuals confined to that space, the ethnic-American (Mexican-American, Black-American, Japanese-American, etc.). The line of "C" transversing "A" is broken, not to suggest the possibility of C_1 ever entering into "A", but to demonstrate that the size of "C" is elastic; it may vary depending upon the whim of "A", and, to a certain extent, upon the tenacity of "C" to remain close to "B". For example, when Congress passes certain Civil Rights legislation, it enlarges the size of "C". Such expansion of "C" into the domain of "A", however, is under the control of "A"; the outside limit to which "C" can intrude upon "A" is dictated by "A".

On the other hand, "C" could, by its own choice, choose to remain small and closer to "B". Certain Mexican-American barrios, for example, have attempted to keep Mexican culture intact by speaking the Spanish language and generally preserving Mexican custom rather than white Anglo-Saxon custom. The size of "C" will also vary depending upon which group

we consider as occupying "C" at any given time. Let us say, for example, that C_1 represents Black America and C_2 represents Mexican America. C_1 may be larger than C_2 because, at least until recently, Black America has depended more upon white America for its culture (language, customs, etc.) than has Mexican America.



There are certain assumptions which can be drawn from this model. First, a member of "C" can never totally move within the realm of "A". This is, at present, a fact of life in white dominated America. Despite the thrust toward integration, white America has tenaciously maintained a portion of "A" into which, on the basis of color, non-white Americans may not enter. As long as a member of "C" can be identified as non-white, he cannot pass into the realm of "A".

On the other hand, a member of "C" can move within his allotted space of "C", and also within "B", unless he has rejected "B" or has been rejected by "B". That is to say, a Japanese-American is relatively

free to return to Japan and drop the hyphenate of being a Japanese-American, if he so desires. Though his ethnic minority experience in the United States may cause him certain problems in acculturation within his new environment, in most cases there are few or no legal or social barriers preventing a member of "C" from entering into "B", such as there are racial barriers preventing a member of "C" from entering into "A" in the United States.

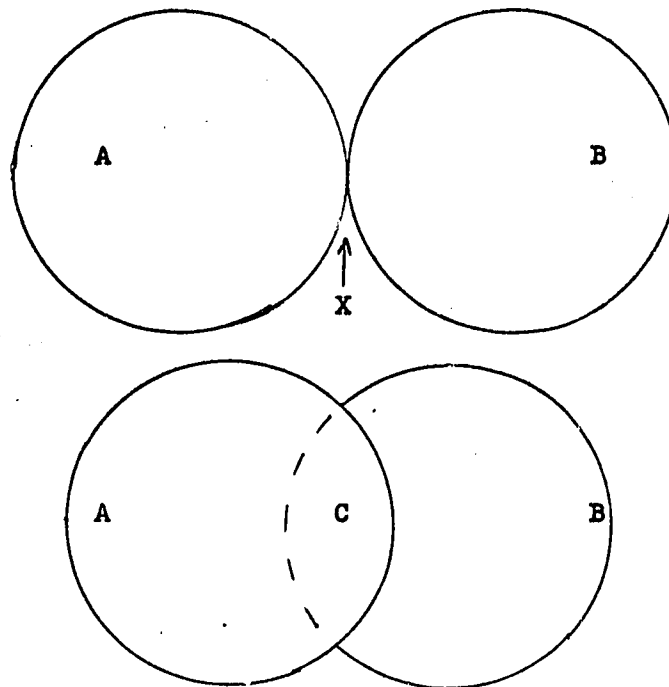
A third and significant assumption for interracial communication is that a member of "A" can never become a member of "C". A white American, despite his good intentions, can never fully contemplate the experience of being a racial minority in a white dominated America. Communication, therefore, between members of "A" and members of "C", or between white and any non-white groups, is highly difficult because of this lack of shared experience. The outstanding characteristic of communication between members of "A" and "C" (interracial communication as opposed to international or intercultural communication) is that the very existence of "C" (a segregated physical and psychological space dictated by "A") has to cause hostility and resentment on the part of "C" members; therefore, tension and great strain arise in any attempts at communication between individuals in "A" and "C".

On the other hand, communication between C_1 , C_2 , C_3 , C_4 , etc. (Black Americans, Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans), stands a better chance of positive response because all these non-white groups, to some degree, share "C". While their "C"'s may vary in size, they

all have experienced being a racial minority in a white dominated culture.. Sitaram calls communication between "C"'s MINORITY COMMUNICATION. Since the terms "minority" and "majority" are so relative, based on one's system of classification, and since the term "minority" tends to cause abrasive reactions among those who regard themselves as a minority in the United States, but a majority in the world, we would prefer to call communication between "C"'s INTERETHNIC COMMUNICATION. Groups also to be included in the "C" classification of interracial communication in the United States are the American natives (Eskimos, Indians, and Hawaiians) who have been forced into "C" space by the white structure.

CONTRACULTURAL COMMUNICATION

MODEL IV



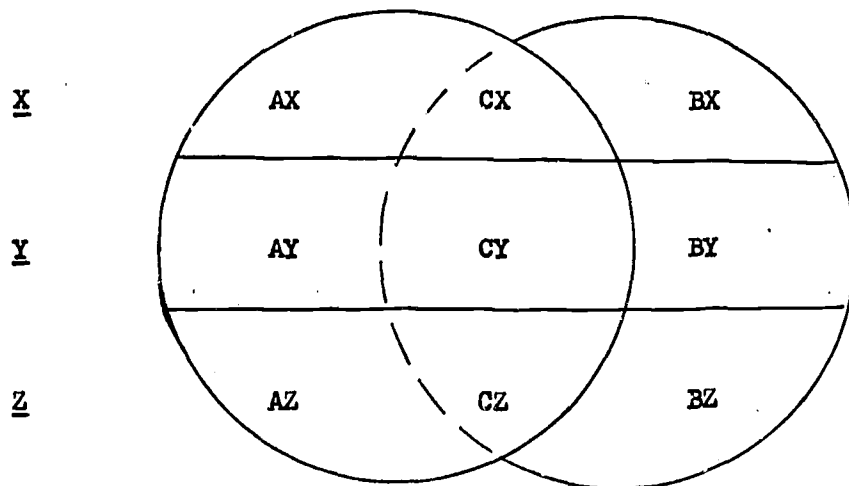
Contracultural communication occurs when the model of intercultural communication becomes transformed, through continued contact of cultures and the imposition of one culture upon the other, into the model of interracial communication. In other words, what began as a simple egalitarian interaction between two strange but relatively equal cultures becomes a colonial relationship where one culture is forced to submit to the power of another. The "X" of the intercultural model, that area of shared or improvised means of communication, becomes the "C" of the interracial model, an area in which individuals are relegated to a position and their mobility to move out of that position is dictated by a dominant structure.

When Colombus first landed on the shores of the New World, for example, he undoubtedly engaged in intercultural communication with the natives he encountered. He improvised a system (exchanged gifts, etc.). As the colonization progressed, however, the white Spaniards came to occupy "A" space and allowed certain of the Indians (from "B") to form a "C" group. Had the Indians maintained control and enslaved the Spaniards, according to our theory, the Indians would then have occupied the "A" circle with the Spaniards relegated to "C". (And those Spaniards remaining safely in Spain composing the "B" circle).

The interracial model, then, also describes contracultural communication. As long as a power relationship exists between cultures, where one has subdued and dominated the other, a "C" circle exists, and as long as a "C" area exists, hostility, tension, and strain are introduced into the communication situation. Communication between an Englishman and an Indian, or a Belgian and a Congolese, serve to exemplify what we mean here by contracultural communication.

ECONOMIC AND/OR CLASS PARAMETER

MODEL V



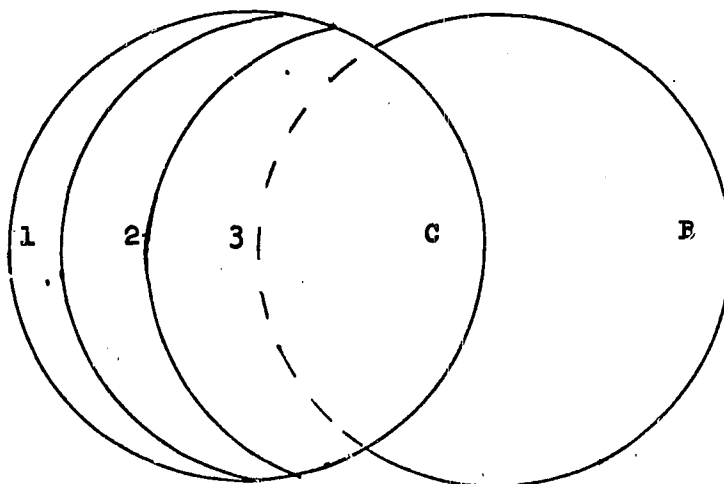
To test the real extent to which racial and cultural differences influence communication between individuals, it is also interesting to hypothesize as to the effects of the introduction of economic and/or class parameters into our interracial model. Since in America, class position is frequently determined by economic position, let us, for the sake of discussion, combine the two, and consider "X" the highest economic/social class, "Y" the middle economic/social class and "Z" the lowest economic/social class. An AX individual in our society would be someone of the caliber of Nelson Rockefeller or Richard Nixon. (Nixon, a rather new member of "X"; Rockefeller, a comfortable inheritor of position "X"). A CX in our society might be Thurgood Marshall or Edward Brook. A BX would be a Japanese financier from Tokyo or a Prime Minister from Ghana.

Several interesting questions arise from such a structure which could be translated into testable hypotheses for future research. For example, would Richard Nixon be more comfortable with and successful in eliciting a desired response from CX Edward Brook (a fellow Republican, though black), an AY (middle class clerk), or an AZ (poor coal miner⁸? Would an American Banker (AX) have a more successful business transaction with an African industrialist (BX) than he would with an American black capitalist (CX)? Do the tensions and strains in interracial communication resulting from the very existence of area "C" diminish as an individual member of "C" climbs the social/economic ladder from Z to X, or do tensions take other more subtle forms of expression? (It should be pointed out at this time, that a member of "C" has upward mobility in this model; he may move from Z to X, but he still has no lateral mobility to the left; that is, a CX can still not become an AX, or even an AZ, for that matter.) These are just a few of the many questions which the introduction of an economic/social parameter suggests.

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WHITE ETHNIC PARAMETER

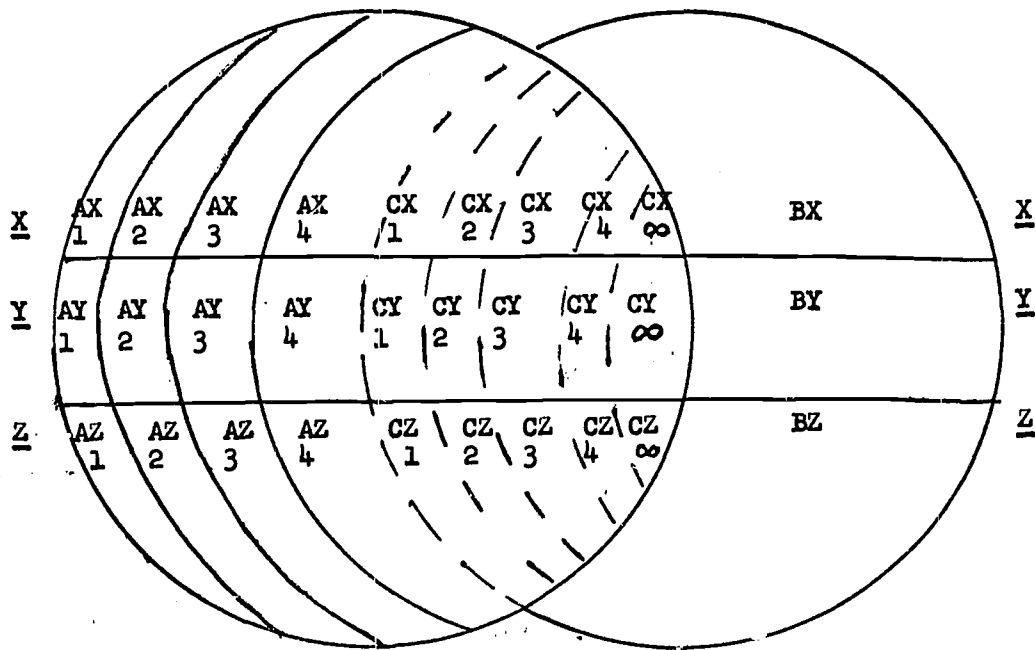
MODEL VI



One of the misleading assumptions of the interracial model thus far has been in the classification of all members of "A" as one unit. From the non-white point of view, all whites are very much alike in the structure of our society. They do, by virtue of their color alone, enjoy many benefits and advantages that non-whites do not. On the other hand, there are ethnic differences between those occupying the "A" space in our model. Attempting, for example, to place Jews within the model of interracial communication posed a problem. The majority of "C" members (Black Americans for example) perceive Jews as white and as a part of the white power structure. In fact, much of black hostility against the white man is aimed at the Jew specifically, since often the Jew is spatially the closest to the black. Yet, the white society does not altogether regard the Jew as a member of the "A" group, and the Jew himself tends to identify at times with the more oppressed non-white groups. It

seemed appropriate, therefore, to add another dimension to the inter-racial communication model, that of white ethnic groups. For example, in Model VI, we have arbitrarily divided "A" into three slices (it could conceivably be divided into as many slices as there are ethnic groups in the United States). The closer the "A" slice is to "C", the more tenuous is its position in the "A" circle. Jews, for example, would occupy position #3, the closest to the realm of "C". Slice #2 might be occupied by Irish, Polish, and Italian Catholics, etc., and slice #1 would most likely be reserved for white Anglo Saxon Protestants.

MODEL VII



This last model is a rather complex attempt to include all the racial, ethnic, social, and economic variations in their various combinations which will influence the manner in which individuals in a complex society can interact. The ABC parameter represents racial groups. The XYZ parameter represents social/economic class. The 123 notation in the "A" circle represents white ethnic groups (the higher the number, the less the group is regarded by the "A" circle). The 123 notations in the "C" circle have no values placed upon them; they simply represent different non-white groups. (e.g., CX₁ would represent a wealthy black man, while CX₂ could represent a wealthy Japanese-American.) The numbers merely denote the difference between the two racial groups. Circle "B" is not divided into complex ethnic subdivisions, since the focus of this paper

has been primarily upon racial and ethnic compositions in the United States which structure human interaction.

SUMMARY

We have attempted, in this paper, to present certain definitions and theoretical structures within which we can view the complex phenomenon of intercultural and interracial communication. We have distinguished between "international communication" (communication on a political level between representatives of nations), "intercultural communication" (communication between individuals of different cultures with no previous colonial relationship), "contracultural communication" (communication between individuals of different cultures where one culture has superimposed its values upon the other and created a dominant-submissive relationship), "interracial communication" (communication between whites and non-whites in the United States with non-whites occupying a marginal position in the society and thereby introducing resentment and resultant strain into the interaction), and "interethnic communication" (communication between members of various non-white groups who have shared the experience of being a racial minority in a white dominated structure).

We have also suggested how the added dimensions of economic class stratification and the multi-ethnic composition of the white power structure further complicates the possibilities for interracial communication in the United States.

Finally, we have not attempted to present the ideal conditions under which cross-cultural and cross-racial communications can occur, but rather we have turned our attention to the description of conditions as they now exist. It is hoped that such a description will enable us to better diagnose the causes of communication breakdown between the various conflicting forces in our complex society.

Footnotes

1. Dean C. Barnlund, Interpersonal Communication: Survey and Studies, Boston; Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1968, p. 18.
2. Ibid., p. 19.
3. Ibid., p. 20.
4. Ibid., p. 5.
5. K. S. Sitaram, "Intercultural Communication: The What and Why of It," International Communication Association, Division V: Intercultural Communication Division, Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 7-8, 1970, p. 3.
6. Ibid., p. 2.
7. Ibid., p. 7.
8. Milton Rokeach, in Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values, San Francisco: Jossey, Bass, Inc., 1968, pp. 62-81, suggests in his findings on race, attitudes, and interpersonal choice, that individuals are more likely to choose as partners those who hold common beliefs with them rather than those who are of the same color. This study was conducted only in the North, which may have influenced its validity. Rokeach also states that discrimination is institutionally sanctioned.
9. Certain religions tend to be associated with given ethnic groups, Italian Catholics, for example. Though religion could be introduced as an entirely separate parameter on our model, we have decided, for the sake of brevity, to combine ethnic background and religious affiliation into one graphic structure.